

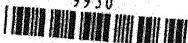
INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

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INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

G.S. Mehta

It is universally recognised that levels of individual earnings are quite possibly related to their educational levels. The highly educated individuals generally receive a higher amount of earnings than those of the less educated or illiterate because of their superior productive skill and knowledge that they acquire through education. Education, not only enhances individual's capacity of earnings but also significantly favours economic growth of the country. Hence higher economic growth can be envisaged to be achieved through significant investment on education and its development, effecting higher productive capability of human resources.

Visualising the economic value of education, the planning strategies around the world are providing much more attention to the expansion and development of educational facilities through allocation of a significant portion of their Gross National Income. Besides educational development, countries are also providing subsidised educational opportunity for economically poor group of population thereby attempting to ensure equal opportunity of education to the population of all kinds of socio-economic groups and better income distribution among the masses.

Although, investment on education is being carried out by almost all the countries but inequality in income distribution among the countries as well as within the country has been

affecting adversely the country's initiatives of equalising educational opportunities. Owing to income inequality, glaring inequalities in educational development exist among countries at the global level, within the country at the regional level and among the population of different racial groups in different locations.

The primary objective of this paper is to highlight the effect of income distribution on the determination of educational opportunity and the level of educational development among countries. Attempt will also be made to explain whether there is any relationship between the level of investment on education and the educational development in the developed and developing countries. Besides, the existing inequalities in educational opportunities will be studied, incorporating the major findings of the past studies.

There are glaring inequalities in the income distribution among various countries at the global level. In the developed countries, the exploitation of economic resources has been made quite intensively and these countries are economically much better off than those of the developing ones. Similarly, a majority of population are monetarily quite rich in the former than those of the latter. Because of better economic conditions, the developed countries have been able to invest a significant amount of their national income on the development of educational facilities and equalise the educational opportunity among the population of different groups, thus finding the reasonable extent of enrolment rates at each level of education; whereas the developing countries

generally lag behind in diverting a sufficient portion of their income to educational development and catering to the needs of equalising education among the masses.

Level of Investment in Educational Development

The review of the pattern of investment on educational development vis-a-vis the gross national product (GNP) available in different countries tells us that the countries are spending a significant portion of their income on education. Although the developed countries are found to have been spending larger amount of their income on educational development than those of the developing ones, the proportionate investment on education over the period is increasing rapidly in developing countries also. But the size of investment, which was made on education in developing countries till 1974, was achieved fifteen years back in developed countries. Further more the budgetary allocations for education in developing countries have been continuously rising at substantial rate. But in the year 1974, there was comparatively a little gap between the proportionate investment made by the developed countries and the developing countries, whereas the

Table 1 : Level of Investment to Education of the Gross National Production and Budget Expenditures

Countries	% Investment of G.N.P.				% Investment of Budget Exp.			
	1960	1965	1970	1974	1960	1965	1970	1974
Developing Countries	2.3	3.0	3.4	3.9	11.7	13.1	13.8	15.1
Developed Countries	4.0	5.2	5.7	5.7	11.3	15.2	16.1	15.6

Source : UNESCO - Statistical Year Books, Paris, UNESCO, 1976, 1977

corresponding gap was much larger in the previous decade.

Moreover, this proportionate investment found to be higher in developed countries as compared to developing ones.

An investment made on educational development in developed countries has undoubtedly brought about the significant progress. Appreciably well developed educational facilities and its equitable distribution among masses in the developed countries have resulted in a higher literacy rate as well as the higher enrolments at various levels of education. Whether cause or effect of income levels and other social forces, educational development and equality of educational opportunity among the population of different groups at different locations are greater in developed countries as compared to developing countries.¹ Sometime one cannot be clear about the relationship between the income equality and education in developed countries because both the rewards and opportunities in these countries are more equitably distributed and the literacy is about universal.²

Looking to the investment patterns we find that developing countries are paying more attention to the development of primary education followed by higher education than secondary education while the developed countries (OECD) are investing more of their total educational fund on secondary and primary education as compared to higher education.³

Level of Enrolments in Different Educations

Considering the enrolment ratio of the children in different age groups at various levels of education, we find that developed countries has made appreciably remarkable progress than those of the developing countries. At the primary level of education, the

Table 2 : Net Enrolment Ratio (Refers to percentage of population between the school going age group)

	Developing Countries	Developed Countries
<u>Primary Level of Education</u>		
1960	47.0	91.3
1965	54.0	92.1
1970	58.0	93.4
1975	62.0	93.8
1977	64.0	94.0
<u>Secondary Level of Education</u>		
1960	14.0	51.0
1965	19.0	59.0
1970	22.0	63.0
1975	26.0	68.0
1977	38.0	86.5
<u>Higher Education</u>		
1960	1.5	10.7
1965	2.2	16.7
1970	3.2	19.7
1975	4.4	22.9

Source : UNESCO - Statistical year book, UNESCO, Paris 1976,
1977, 1978

enrolment ratio has reached at the maximum (94 per cent) followed by the secondary level of education (86.59 per cent) and the higher level of education (22.9 per cent) in the developed countries. On the other hand, the developing countries are lagging behind the developed countries at each level of education. At the primary level of education, the developing countries have also made considerable progress where 64 per cent children are enroled. On the other hand, at the secondary level of education the enrolment ratio is nearly half of what we find in the developed countries and only 4.4 per cent of corresponding age group population is enroled at higher level of education. Moreover, in the developing countries the faster rate of growth in enrolment ratio has been

noticed at each level of education during the period 1960-75.

Similarly in the developed countries, a faster growth rate of enrolments is noticed at the higher level of education, besides maximum enrolment ratio at primary and secondary levels.

Thus, while reviewing the level of investment of different educational levels and the enrolment ratio that have been achieved at each level of educations by the developed and developing countries, it is noticed that there is a significant positive relationship between the level of investment on education and the level of enrolment ratio in developed as well as developing countries. For instance, the developing countries have been investing a proportionately higher amount on elementary level of education and have, thus, attained the highest proportion of enrolment ratio at that level. Whereas in developed countries, both investment and enrolment ratio of relatively higher order are noticed at the secondary level of education.

Levels of Equality of Educational Opportunity

As indicated earlier, the children of developed countries have much greater chances of educational opportunities as compared to those of the developing countries. The expansion of educational facilities has been carried out in a quite spread manner in both the developed as well as developing countries following the slogan of equal rights of educational opportunities for every group of population based on sex and race. But the variations in the economic conditions of the population living in developed and developing countries are of alarming nature and probably less capable of providing equal opportunity

of education. Its proveness is more peculiar in developing countries, where majority of the population is living below the subsistence and their poor economic conditions do not allow their children to avail the educational opportunity. Moreover, developing countries are less resourceful and hence families are not generally capable of affording educational costs of their children. Besides, the social and cultural barriers of the families in developing countries, sometimes, deprive female children from availing educational opportunities. On the other hand, families in developed countries are economically better-off and they have rational social and cultural structure. Beside, the government approach for encouraging population to better utilise educational opportunities is more effective in developed countries.

In developed countries both boys and girls are treated equally in regard to availment of educational facilities. Therefore, the educational equality at each level of education is better ensured. Analysing the percentage enrolments of the children of different age group at different educational levels, it is seen that the girls generally out number the enrolment of the boys at both the primary and secondary levels of education. However, the corresponding percentage at the higher level of education goes against to what we experienced in case of primary and secondary levels. On the other hand, in developing countries, these enrolment percentages in respect of girls are found to be relatively low as compared to boys at all educational levels. Moreover, this enrolment percentage among girls at higher level of education in these countries is only half of that of the boys and one-fifth of the percentage enrolment

Table 3 : Percentage Enrolment of Population in Different age Groups and at Various Educational Levels

Countries	6-11 years (1977)			12-17 years (1977)			18-23 years (1975)		
	Male	Fe-male	Total	Male	Fe-male	Total	Male	Fe-male	Total
Developing Countries	78.8	56.1	64.0	43.9	31.7	38.0	11.3	5.9	8.7
Developed Countries	94.0	94.1	94.0	86.0	87.2	86.5	32.6	27.3	30.0
World	77.1	64.7	70.9	56.6	48.5	52.3	18.8	13.4	16.1

Source : UNESCO - Statistical Year Book, 1976, 1977, and 1978.

of the girls in developed countries. This witnesses the fact that the greater inequalities in educational opportunities are more pronounced in developing countries. The comparative data of 1960 and 1975 reveals⁴ that in the developing countries the probability of male in the school going age group (6-23 years) being enrolled is 40 per cent higher than that of female, wider differences exist in some regions. For instance, in the Arab States this figure reaches at 70 per cent. Further the probability of a male being enrolled is higher than that of female by 30 per cent in the first age group (6-11 years), 48 per cent in the second age group (12-17 years) and 84 per cent in the last (18-23 years) age group. Besides, the percentage enrolment of males seems to dominate at the higher level of education.

Thus, we observe that the developed countries are economically well built and their expenditure on education is higher and the enrolment ratio is also significantly higher at each level of education; whereas although the developing countries

limited resources for educational development, they have achieved a reasonable rate of enrolments at each level of education, however still lag behind those of the developed countries.

Accordingly, there are certain socio-economic groups of population in the developed as well as developing countries whose economic conditions do not allow them to get their children enroled at desired levels of education. The poor families particularly in developing countries try to manage anyhow to enrol their children at primary level of education. Once that level of education is completed, the parents prefer to engage their children in their household economic activities to enhance their family income and meet household expenditure rather than to get them further enroled for higher education. However, economically well built families usually get their children enroled in better educational institutions because of the better affording capacities to bear the burden of educational costs. The degree of inequalities in educational opportunity is found to be much higher at higher level of education as compared to its lower level.⁵ Field⁶ reveals that in developing countries the enrolments at all levels of education are dominated mostly by the families of higher income groups while in the lower level of education, the enrolment gaps are substantial. Jencks⁷ study reveals that the true correlation between parental income and child educational attainment and opportunity accounts for 0.44 while the multiple correlation between family economic status and child educational attainment turns down to be 0.55. The differences in the educational attainment of children belonging to upper income group and lower income group could be 55 per cent. According to the

study of Colmen the differences in the socio-economic and racial variable unequalise the educational opportunity between 70 to 80 per cent at the second level of education⁸ and at the first and third level of education it accounts for 60 to 61 per cent variation⁹. Obviously, there is a significant relationship between income inequality and the inequality in the educational attainment of the population living in the country.¹⁰

Conclusion

It is found that the economically well-off countries (developed) as well as the population of higher income group are the main participants of educational opportunities. They are intensively owning a significant part of income resources and incomes as well as / enhancing the further economic gains by utilising the educational opportunities. In juxtaposition, economically backward countries and poor population are always lagging behind and have less availability of economic resources and educational opportunities. Thus, the poor remain poor and the well-to-do-section of the society often enjoy the various kinds of economic benefits.

Thus, the inequality in educational opportunity among different group of population has been noticed due to the prominence of inequality in income distribution. The educational inequality could be mitigated only if the equitable distribution of income among the masses is ensured and educational institutions are made available at appropriate locations with adequate amount of required infrastructure and other basic amenities.

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